



United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer to:
5003.1 (NV024.09)

Decision Record **Effective Immediately**

DOI-BLM-NV-W010-2014-0036-DNA

Introduction

During the summer of 2014 the Denio Basin Fire burned 1,931 acres of combined public lands. A total of 1,931 acres of BLM-administered public lands were burned by the fire, with 1,497 acres within the Pueblo Mountain Grazing Allotment, and 434 acres within the Wilder-Quinn Grazing Allotment. Both Grazing Allotments are within the jurisdiction of the Humboldt River Field Office (HRFO). After an interdisciplinary review, it was determined that Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) was needed to maintain and/or restore important resources affected by the fire. These resources include such components as vegetation structure, vegetative composition, wildlife habitat, and forage for wildlife and livestock.

Background

The Denio Basin Fire was ignited by lightning on 7/10/2014 and contained on 7/13/2014. There are no records of the area within the Denio Basin Fire area having burned previously. Approximately 1,217 acres burned within the Pueblo Mountain WSA. The fire area is considered to be year-round occupied habitat for California bighorn sheep, Greater Sage Grouse, year round mule deer and pronghorn low density habitat, as defined by the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). The Greater Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) is listed as a candidate species. At least one active Sage-Grouse lek site is known to be present approximately 0.75 miles from the Denio Basin Fire. The fire burned low density habitat as defined by ODFW, which is equivalent to Preliminary General Habitat (PGH) in Nevada. The California bighorn (*Ovis canadensis var. californiana*) is a BLM special status species, Nevada and Oregon State protected, and a game species in both Nevada and Oregon. The area is also heavily utilized by assorted small mammals, migratory birds, and is near raptor nesting sites. The loss of shrub cover and nesting and foraging habitat has occurred as a result of the fire. The fire burned up-slope and in close proximity to the Denio Creek which is occupied with Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT). The burned area is a high precipitation zone and a high quality habitat for multiple wildlife species. Three small springs burned within the fire area.

The fire burned on all slope aspects with most of the fire occurring on east facing slopes and around 5,500 to 6,500 feet in elevation. The soils are listed as moderate to highly erosive to both wind and water events which present a high risk of soil loss and annual plant invasion. These risks include potential for increased sediment delivery into the nearby Denio Creek, loss of California bighorn sheep, mule deer, and Greater Sage Grouse habitat. The area is also heavily utilized by assorted small mammals, migratory birds, and is near raptor nesting sites. The loss of shrub cover and nesting and foraging habitat has occurred as a result of the fire. The fire burned an estimated 3 miles of fencing.

An ESR plan was developed to identify the treatments needed to maintain and restore resources within the burned area and to establish a healthy, stable ecosystem. The ESR plans includes aerially seeding of 1,931 acres of BLM managed public lands with Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*) and mountain sagebrush (*A. tridentata ssp. vaseyana*), and ground seeding of 350 acres of other site adapted plants. The plan includes the management of invasive plants on up to 100 acres annually through the year 2017. The plan also includes planting 44,000 Wyoming sage brush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*) and/or bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*) seedlings intermittently across 400 acres of BLM managed public lands that burned in the fire.

DECISION:

Given the emergency nature of stabilization treatments, this is a “Full Force and Effect” decision authorizing implementation of treatments immediately under 43 CFR 5003.1.

It is my decision to approve the Denio Basin Fire ESR Plan as proposed in the Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA), DOI-BLM-NV-W010-2014-0036-DNA, including all environmental protection measures which are attached to this decision, and monitoring subject to standard operating procedures identified in the Normal Year Fire Rehabilitation Plan and Environmental Assessment #NV-020-04-21, which are hereby incorporated into this decision.

Rationale:

The BLM has made the determination that as a result of the Denio Basin Fire, affected vegetative communities, particularly sagebrush communities are at risk from long term habitat degradation due to the presence of invasive annual plant species within the fire disturbance. Without management action in the form of seeding, the vegetative community affected by the Denio Basin Fire is unlikely to recover. Soil resources are at risk from combined wind and water erosion, wildlife habitat values have been unacceptably compromised with limited potential for recovery, and other resources on the public lands are at immediate risk of erosion or other damage.

The Winnemucca District has established the ESR program, which was analyzed in the Normal Year Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment 2004 and which has eight principle objectives:

- 1) To promptly stabilize and prevent further degradation to affected resources on lands within a fire perimeter.
- 2) To repair damages caused by fire suppression operations in accordance with approved land management plans, regulations, policies, and all relevant federal, state, and local laws.
- 3) Prevent losses of private structures and property on public lands.
- 4) To prescribe cost effective post-fire stabilization measures necessary to protect human life, property, and critical cultural and natural resources.
- 5) To repair or improve lands damaged directly by the wildland fire and unlikely to recover naturally from severe fire damage by emulating historic or pre-fire ecosystem structure, function, diversity, and dynamics.
- 6) To restore and/or establish healthy, stable ecosystems in the burned area, even if these ecosystems cannot fully emulate historic or pre-fire condition.
- 7) To restore sagebrush habitats that fall within sage-grouse/sagebrush obligate species use areas.
- 8) Deter the establishment and spread of invasive and/or noxious weeds.

The use of Wyoming and mountain sagebrush at this site would allow for the re-establishment of shrub structure and would also allow for the long-term seedling recruitment as a result of the seeded shrubs successfully reproducing. Other site-adapted native plant species would be utilized depending on seed and funding availability.

Monitoring will be oriented toward addressing the following questions: 1) Have the desirable species been successfully established, and do they provide sufficient cover to adequately protect the site from soil erosion? 2) Is there evidence that a self-sustaining community has established? 3) Are vegetative reproduction and establishment of the desirable species occurring? When possible, all monitoring sites will have adjacent, non-treated reference sites established to compare results of treatments. Density and cover measurements will be utilized to determine the effectiveness of the seeding treatment.

ESR treatment efficacy objectives are defined as follows:

For aerially seeded areas:

Objectives for aerial seeding are as follows:

1. Obtain an average of 0.5 sagebrush plants per meter² by the end of the third year following fire containment, which occurred on 07/13/2014.
2. Obtain 70% or greater perennial cover of the low potential perennial plant cover for the appropriate ecological site by the end of the third year following fire containment.
3. The aerial seeding would result in lower abundance (density and cover) of invasive annual plant species, and a higher abundance of desirable perennial plant species than the unseeded control areas.
4. Seeded species would be well established and reproducing.
5. Obtain the above results by the end of the third year from fire containment, which occurred on 07/13/2014.

For ground seeded areas:

Objectives for ground seeding are as follows:

1. Obtain an average of 1 sagebrush plants per meter² by the end of the third year following fire containment, which occurred on 07/13/2014.
2. Obtain 70% or greater perennial cover of the low potential perennial plant cover for the appropriate ecological site by the end of the third year following fire containment.
3. The ground seeding would result in lower abundance (density and cover) of invasive annual plant species and a higher abundance of desirable perennial plant species than the unseeded control areas.
4. Seeded species would be well established and reproducing.
5. Obtain the above results by the end of the third year from fire containment, which occurred on 07/13/2014.

For Seedling Planting areas:

Objectives for seedling planting are as follows:

1. Obtain a survival rate of planted seedlings exceeding 60% by the end of the fiscal year 2017.
2. The seedling planting would result in lower abundance (density and cover) of invasive annual plant species, and a higher abundance of desirable perennial plant species than the unseeded control areas.
3. Seedlings would well established and reproducing.

For invasive species management:

1. Thoroughly inventory and document areas infested by noxious weeds within the Denio Basin Fire perimeter.
2. Prohibit noxious weed infestations from expanding beyond their current size and reduce or eliminate infestations were possible, with critical resource areas being prioritized for control efforts.

The actions identified in this decision have received National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review in a Determination of NEPA Adequacy, DOI-BLM-NV-W010-2014-0036-DNA. On the basis of the information contained in the DNA, it is my determination that implementation of the management actions will not have environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the NEPA documents identified in the DNA.

- The proposed action is in conformance with and is consistent with the Andrews/Steens Resource Management Plan (RMP).
- The proposed action will not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation of the public lands and is consistent to the maximum extent possible with federal law and Federal Land Policy and Management (FLPMA), state, and local laws, regulations, policy, and plans.
- The proposed action will not adversely impact any threatened or endangered species or significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
- Based on the Presidents National Energy Policy and Executive Order 13212, the Proposed Action will not generate any adverse energy impacts or limit energy production and distribution. Therefore, no "Statement of Adverse: Energy Impact" is required per WO 1M No 2002-053 and NV 1M 2002-049.

Conformance:

The actions proposed are in conformance with the following documents:

Land Use Plan: Andrews/Steens Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved: 2005

Winnemucca District Fire Management Plan

Date Approved: September 2004

The Winnemucca District Normal Year Fire Rehab Plan

Date Approved: 2004

Applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action:

NEPA Documents:

- Holloway Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plans Environment Assessment, DOI-BLM-OR-B060-2013-0003-EA (DR/FONSI 3/1/2013)
- Montana Mountains Cooperative Fuels Treatment Projects Environmental Assessment No. DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-2011-0005-EA (DR/FONSI 8/2/2012)
- Winnemucca Wildland Urban Interface Area Treatment Project Environmental Assessment, DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-0011-EA, (DR/FONSI 9/20/2010)
- Paradise Fuelbreak Maintenance Environmental Assessment No.: DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-2010-0009-EA (DR/FONSI 7/19/2010)

- Santa Rosa Fuelbreak Project Environmental Assessment No.: DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-2010-0003-EA (DR/FONSI 2/19/2010)
- Vegetation Treatment Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Seventeen Western States Programmatic Final Environmental Impact Statement, 07/2007, (ROD 9/29/07)
- Normal Year Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment EA# NV-020-04-21, 06/2004, (DR/FONSI 8/19/04)
- Integrated Weed Management Environmental Assessment NV-020-02-19, 8/07/02, (DR/FONSI 8/27/02)
- Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States Environmental Impact Statement, 5/91, (ROD 8/91)

Other Documents:

- IM NV 2014-022 Revised Direction for Proposed Activities within Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat (July 2014)
- WO IM 2014-114 Sage-Grouse Habitat and Wildland Fire Management (July 2014)
- Holloway Fire ESR Determination of NEPA Adequacy DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-2013-0015-DNA (DR 12/27/2012)
- USFWS Biological Opinion for the Normal Year Fire Rehabilitation Plan (August 2004)
- A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures. Produced by: Sage-grouse National Technical Team, 12/21/2011 (pp 27)

Authority:

This wildfire management decision is issued under 43 CFR 5003.1 and is effective immediately.

Consultation and Coordination in Development of the DNA:

Coordination has occurred with Oregon Department of Wildlife regarding the Denio Basin Fire ESR actions in the form of an email with the project lead on 8/14/2014 to discuss fire-affected resources and restoration priorities. In addition, coordination regarding planned ESR actions has occurred between the Winnemucca District Range Management Specialist and the affected permittee in the form of a phone call on 08/15/2014.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

The BLM has made the determination that vegetation, soil, or other resources on the public lands are at immediate risk of erosion or other damage due to wildfire. Thus, notwithstanding the provisions of 43 CFR 4.21(a)(1), filing a notice of appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 does not automatically suspend the effect of the decision. Appeal of this decision may be made to the Interior Board of Land Appeals in accordance with 43 CFR 4.410. The Interior Board of Land Appeals must decide an appeal of this decision within 60 days after all pleadings have been filed, and within 180 days after the appeal was filed.

A person who wishes to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals must do so under 43 CFR 4.411 and must file in the office of the officer who made the decision (not the board), in writing to James W. Schroeder, Humboldt River Field Office, 5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard, Winnemucca, Nevada 89445. A person served with the decision being appealed must transmit the notice of appeal in time to be filed in the office where it is required to be filed within thirty (30) days after the date of service.

The notice of appeal must give the serial number or other identification of the case and may include a statement of reasons for the appeal, a statement of standing if required by § 4.412(b), and any arguments the appellant wishes to make. Form 1842-1 provides additional information regarding filing an appeal.

No extension of time will be granted for filing a notice of appeal. If a notice of appeal is filed after the grace period provided in §4.401(a), the notice of appeal will not be considered and the case will be closed by the officer from whose decision the appeal is taken. If the appeal is filed during the grace period provided in §4.401(a) and the delay in filing is not waived, as provided in that section, the notice of appeal will not be considered and the appeal will be dismissed by the Board.

The appellant shall serve a copy of the notice of appeal and any statements of reason, written arguments, or briefs under §4.413 on each adverse party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken and on the Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Regional Solicitor, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2800 Cottage Way, Room E-2753, Sacramento, California 95825-1890. Service must be accompanied by personally serving a copy to the party or by sending the document by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address of record in the bureau, no later than 15 days after filing the document.

In addition, within thirty (30) days of receipt of this decision you have the right to file a petition for a stay together with your appeal in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.21. The petition must be served upon the same parties specified above.

Pursuant to 43 CFR 4.471(c), a petition for stay, if filed, must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied;
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits;
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and,
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

43 CFR 4.471 (d) provides that the appellant requesting a stay bears the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

At the conclusion of any document that a party must serve, the party or its representative must sign a written statement certifying that service has been or will be made in accordance with the applicable rules and specifying the date and manner of such service (43 CFR 4.422(c)(2)).

/s James W. Schroeder
James W. Schroeder
Field Manager
Humboldt River Field Office

11/04/ 2014
Date

Attachment